



CHINFO NEWS CLIPS

Navy Office of Information, Washington, DC

(703) 697-5342

Wednesday, October 20, 2004

BLOOMBERG.COM 19 OCT 04

Pentagon May Shorten Iraq Tours, Guard Chief Says

By Tony Capaccio

The Pentagon may as early as next year reduce the 18-month tours required of National Guardsmen serving in Iraq amid hardships for their families and employers, the commander of the National Guard Bureau said.

The current tour, which includes a year in Iraq, could be cut to as six to nine months in the country if violence decreases, more Iraqis are trained to fight and the Guard retrains troops to meet the needs of the conflict, Lt. Gen. Steven Blum said in an interview. That includes converting about 80,000 troops trained in Cold War combat missions to handle policing, civil duties and intelligence, he said.

"If the security situation in Iraq warrants and we are successful in rebalancing the force as quickly as I think we can, we should be able to start reducing the rotations" as early as next spring, he said. "Whatever rotation the Army goes to is what we will go to."

Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry has accused President George W. Bush of using the Guard and U.S. Army Reserve as a "backdoor draft" for Iraq. There are about 19,000 Guard members and 13,000 reservists in Iraq, accounting for 23 percent of 138,000 U.S. troops there. That's up from 9 percent in May 2003.

The shortened tours are not likely to start with the next rotation of forces that begins in December with the deployment of the New York National Guard's 42nd Division, "but I think the one after that we'll be able to do it," said Blum, who visited Iraq last month for a week.

Prospects of a long, dangerous stint in Iraq have hurt the National Guard's recruiting efforts. The Guard for the year ended Sept. 30 missed its recruiting goals for the first time since 1994,

attracting 49,210 members, or 6,792 fewer than its goal of 56,002.

Pentagon officials have estimated that Guard and Reserve troops could increase to 43 percent of all U.S. ground forces in Iraq by next year. It will announce later this month which units will be rotated into Iraq starting in May or June and staying into 2007.

About 93,113 of the Army National Guard's 350,000 members are deployed today, with North Carolina, Washington, Arkansas, South Carolina and New York respectively providing the greatest numbers. North Carolina has 3,404 Guards members mobilized.

Of 1,102 U.S. personnel who have died in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion, 125 belonged to the National Guard. The U.S. through July has spent about \$91 billion of roughly \$125 billion Congress has approved since April 2003 for Iraq operations.

There are roughly 147,000 U.S. troops in the U.S. Central Command region, which includes Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, of which about 48,000 are Guard members or reservists.

The Army started in July 2003 to double Iraq duty tours to one year instead of the traditional six months, a practice the National Guard also adopted. Guard members also serve three months before going to the country and three months of so-called demobilization, for a total of 18 months away from their families and jobs.

"Employers are frustrated with the lack of certainty about when their employee will leave and come back but they have been remarkably resilient," Blum said. "That makes it all the more reason we've got to get these rotations down."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld jump-started the current rotation debate in a June 14

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memo to Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker.

“I would be interested to hear from you why you think you should keep doing 12-month rotations and if you were to change to six, seven, eight or nine months, how you would you do it and what would be the pros and cons.” Rumsfeld wrote.

“It's a sensible question and the answer General Schoomaker would give is very similar to mine, I'm sure,” Blum said after reading the memo.

Acting Army Secretary Les Brownlee in an Oct. 8 memo to Shoomaker said, “During the next few months, conditions permitting, we should

begin to work closely with commanders to examine potential reductions in tour lengths.”

Blum estimated that the Guard's tour might be reduced to a year in total, including up to nine months in Iraq. He said there are not enough troops “to shorten the tours yet.”

The expanded pool of Guard units with training comparable to the regular Army's 34 brigades is slowly increasing, Blum said.

“We need to grow these new brigades as quick as we can so we so have that rotation base,” he said. “We are going to make our brigade combat teams exactly like those of the U.S. Army.”

Russians To Join NATO Antiterrorism Mission

Two Russian warships from the Black Sea Fleet will soon join NATO's antiterrorism mission, Operation Active Endeavour, in the eastern Mediterranean, according to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov.

The announcement was made after a daylong meeting Thursday between defense ministers of NATO and Russia in Poiana Brasov, Romania. The meeting focused on how NATO and Russia can cooperate in the fight against terrorism, according to a NATO news release.

Seven warships and various aircraft from numerous NATO nations are taking part in the operation, including the American frigate USS Underwood. It involves surveillance and monitoring of major shipping lanes to deter terrorist operations, and to escort other ships when needed.

Operation Active Endeavour kicked off in October 2001 in the eastern Mediterranean and in March 2004 expanded to include the entire Mediterranean.

Assistant Secretary Discusses New Civilian Personnel System

By Journalist 1st Class Teresa J. Frith,
Navy Personnel Command Communications

MILLINGTON, Tenn. -- Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs William A. Navas Jr. and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Civilian Human Resources Patricia Adams discussed the new National Security Personnel System (NSPS) with Navy civilian employees and their supervisors in Millington, Tenn., at a town hall meeting held in September.

Congress authorized NSPS as part of the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, allowing the Defense Department authority to develop new civilian human resources (HR), labor-management relations and employee appeals systems. Considered the most significant change since the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, it is expected to offer flexibilities never before afforded to the civil service system.

Navas stressed the importance of everyone's involvement in the start-up of NSPS.

"We want to address any concerns that people have about the new system," said Navas. "We need everyone's input in order to help decide the direction we will go as decisions are made to develop this new system."

"This is part of a brand new concept," said Navas. "It is part of the plan to help better manage our 'total force' of employees, including the active force, the Reserves and civilian employees."

NSPS will not affect Title 5 areas, such as merit principles, rules against prohibited personnel practices, benefits, allowances and travel, subsistence expenses, training, leave and work schedules, other personnel systems under law, anti-discrimination laws, current Lab Demos (until FY '08) and veteran's preference.

"This is a huge organizational change," said Adams. "NSPS is a more flexible system, and should be easier to understand and better for everyone. For example, in the current system it takes about 85 to 90 days to hire a new employee. We hope to shorten that."

Adams added that NSPS is a performance-based system, vice the current seniority-based system. For example, an employee in the current GS system is restricted in how many pay grades they can advance at a time or how they can apply for certain level jobs. Under NSPS, there would be no such restrictions and a person could apply for a job if they had the right qualifications.

It will bring about HR changes in other areas, including pay banding (for more information on pay banding, go to www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps and click on pay bands on left side), pay for performance, staffing (internal/external), labor relations, reduction in force and employee appeals.

The first step in full implementation is slated to begin July 2005 with Spiral One. Spiral One will not be a test; it will actually be the beginning of NSPS and will include 50,000-60,000 civilian employees from organizations all over the world. They will be from organizations that have volunteered and then been nominated for this first step.

Navy Personnel Command has volunteered to be considered for Spiral One. In order to be chosen for the initial phase, a command must have an adaptive workforce climate, have demonstrated acceptance of readiness for a change, and should have established methods to measure effectiveness of mission accomplishment, and have a strategic or business plan tied to Human Resources practices.

Spiral Two will follow in January 2006 by adding more employees, with full implementation of NSPS scheduled for July 2007/2008.

Over the next few months, programs are expected to be put into place to educate both the military and civilian workforces on NSPS. For more information on NSPS, go to www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps or www.donhr.navy.mil/nsps.

U.S. Joint Forces Command Moves Out As New Global Joint Force Provider

By Ann Roosevelt

In August, U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) reached initial operational capability as the primary joint force provider worldwide, and expects to be fully operational by the end of FY '05, a defense official said.

"Now, instead of just the 48 percent of the forces we have under our combatant command, we are responsible for the oversight of all the conventional forces under JFCOM, PACOM (Pacific Command) and EUCOM (European Command), which is equivalent to about 80 percent of the total conventional force size," Jay Burdon, deputy director for JFCOM's Joint Deployment Operations Division, said in an interview with Defense Daily Oct. 15.

However, JFCOM does not provide forces from Special Operations Command, Transportation Command or Strategic Command.

JFCOM's role as primary joint force provider is to "develop recommended global joint sourcing solutions for forces and capabilities worldwide," according to a June 25 memo from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, responding to lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The force providing process begins with a supported commander--such as Central Command--generating a requirement, Burdon said. The Joint Staff must validate that requirement, and then it is sent sequentially to JFCOM, PACOM and EUCOM to find the most capable, effective and efficient force to fill the requirement.

"That was a pretty inefficient way of executing that process as we looked at it, and it resulted in a relatively longer period of time required to get the force to theater," he said.

Now, the Joint Staff comes directly to JFCOM, he said. "We have the visibility of those forces and then we provide a recommendation on which force would fill the requirement."

While providing forces appears to be a time consuming and personnel intensive process, it all depends on the urgency of the requirement

and the actual capability required, Burdon said. "We can turn for the most urgent of requirements this entire process in a matter of hours. In the most difficult of the processes it might take a matter of weeks to do."

As global force provider, JFCOM also serves as a forcing function for jointness, since capabilities could come from any service. "We don't expect a supported commander to tell us the force he wants, we expect a supported commander to tell us what capability he needs," he said. "Our objective is to give him the most capable and the most ready force to do that."

To reach initial operational capability (IOC), JFCOM reorganized its J-3 staff into three branches, creating a more efficient cycle, he said. The Force Analysis Branch monitors force availability and readiness and recommends forces that can meet requirements. The recommendations go to the Force Provider Branch that drafts deployment orders assigning the component command that will supply the forces. Then the Current Operations Branch becomes responsible for tracking the execution of the order and tracking forces from their home station to the theater commander, then later tracking it back home. Then the Force Analysis Branch picks up again, monitoring the force until it's ready to assume another mission.

The focus for executing the process is the Joint Deployment Center, now located in a former operations center. A new facility is planned to be equipped with state-of-the-art collaborative tools and communications. JFCOM is working on a JDC design with California-based Applied Minds, a creative research and development company founded by former executives in the imagineering group of the Walt Disney Co. [DCQ]. "We're hoping to have a design done in the next six months; we're pursuing the resources next fiscal year to start construction on it," Burdon said.

Additionally, information technology (IT) upgrades and collaborative tools are in the works.

The major IT challenge is to find a tool to mitigate the problem that each service tracks

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different aspects of its forces using several different tools, he said. The J-8, force structure section of the Joint Staff, is conducting a functional area analysis to determine the JFCOM's requirements as global joint force provider to create a Global Visibility Tool.

"If we had a single tool that could be utilized to either mine the data from all those different [service] tools, or a single tool that was implemented DoD-wide for all the services to utilize to be able to monitor readiness, availability, location" the process could be more efficient, Burdon said.

Additionally the process itself, which

now uses a number of different software tools, could be streamlined. "JFCOM is interested in trying to identify a tool that will enable them to execute that process electronically rather than through staff action packages and things like that," Burdon said. One collaborative system would allow all the people in the force providing process to "see" where requirements, orders or forces were in the process.

Since August, the process is moving more smoothly, Burden said. "We have the third rotation of combat forces [for Iraq] identified, we're working on the combat support, service support forces now."

Flu Shots Scarce At Some Military Bases

By The Associated Press

RALEIGH, North Carolina -- At military bases already strained by the demands of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the men and women who defend the nation aren't being defended against the flu.

Soldiers who deploy are getting shots once they receive their orders, as are young children and others in at-risk groups, according to base spokesmen from around the state. But for many others in the military, flu shots are as scarce as they are for civilians.

Normally, the Navy hospital at Camp Lejeune -- one of the state's two largest installations -- would be getting 50,000 to 60,000 doses of flu vaccine for more than 40,000 active duty Marines, dependents and retirees.

"There are none aboard the base at this time," said George Reynolds, director of community health at Lejeune's hospital, which also covers needs at the New River air station. "We have not received the first dose."

Deploying troops are exceptions to the federal rules that suggest only at-risk groups such as young children, the elderly and the chronically ill should receive the vaccine.

Marines who get deployment orders as well as special operations soldiers and aviators also classified as highly deployable -- meaning they might be called to leave the country at any time -- will get vaccinated only once the Department of Defense decides how to dole out the military's vaccine supply.

"If they get exposed to an area where the flu is epidemic, there is a readiness problem," Reynolds said.

But Marines who are staying at the base and normally would get flu shots will not this

year. Anyone who comes down with the flu will be quarantined and treated by medical personnel, Reynolds said.

"We don't normally find high-risk people on active duty," Reynolds said. "They're all healthy individuals."

Vaccine supplies have been short since British regulators shut down shipments from Chiron Corp., which had made millions of flu shots in a British factory. That has cut the U.S. supply of vaccine almost in half.

North Carolina's other large military installation -- Fort Bragg -- also is grappling with how to handle a limited supply of vaccine. Army hospital spokeswoman Shannon Lynch said soldiers deploying with the 18th Airborne Corps will receive the vaccine, but those who stay behind will not.

High-risk dependents will be vaccinated as shots become available.

"Then it's pretty much take care of yourself, for the rest of us," Lynch said. "If you're sick, don't go to work. If you sneeze, cover your mouth. Wash your hands frequently. If you use someone else's telephone, wipe it down."

Officials reported 76 cases of flu at Bragg during last winter's flu season.

At the 82nd Airborne Division, whose 15,000 paratroopers make up one of Bragg's major units, spokeswoman Maj. Amy Hannah said officials plan to have enough vaccine on hand for 3,000 to 5,000 paratroopers, should deployment orders come during flu season.

"The majority of the division is between 18 and 40 and in the low-risk category," Hannah said, adding there may be a few paratroopers with a chronic disease or a few who are pregnant.

Navy Medicine Will Protect Service Members, Patients Despite Flu Vaccine Shortages

By Ellen Maurer, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

WASHINGTON -- Navy health care providers began administering flu vaccinations this week in October, focusing supplies on deploying Sailors and Marines, as well as patients who are at highest risk for getting sick this season.

This marks an on-time start to the Navy's annual immunization season, which has been affected but not halted by world-wide shortages of the flu vaccine.

Department of Defense officials said their supplies for all the services are less than expected – about 1.5 million fewer doses than projected. However, those who most need the vaccine will get it, according to Capt. Edward M. Kilbane, an infectious disease expert at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D.C.

“The health and well-being of our Navy and Marine Corps family is our highest priority,” said Kilbane. “We anticipate that all of our high-risk beneficiaries and all of our operationally employed service members will be vaccinated on time this flu season. This includes individuals in critical operational duty positions here in the U.S. The major impact on DoD will be – as it will be for the rest of the United States – on our otherwise healthy, non-deployed population.”

The DoD's priority groups for this year's flu vaccine include operational military personnel, recruit/trainee populations and their instructors, beneficiaries with high risk medical

conditions and health care workers with direct patient contact.

In previous years, the flu vaccine has been mandatory for all active-duty and Reserve service members, as well as some government civilians working in medical treatment facilities. Due to this year's shortened supply, some service members will be deferred from getting the vaccine. Those who are deferred from taking the vaccine this year, however, will still be considered medically fit for full duty. Furthermore, those identified in the first priority group will receive the vaccine, in an effort, military officials said, to “promote military readiness, protect the health of those who serve, and to prevent outbreaks.”

“We will be asking some healthy Sailors and Marines, as well as their family members, not to get a flu shot this year. We want to ensure our supplies go to those who most need it, including the sick, injured and operationally employed,” said Kilbane. “For those who do not get a flu shot this year, I strongly suggest they use other preventive health measures, like staying away from other people who are sick, washing your hands frequently and staying home from work if you do get sick.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the flu is a contagious respiratory illness that can range from mild to severe symptoms that may, in severe cases, result in death. About 5 to 20 percent of Americans get the flu each year. The most serious cases involve those who have weakened immune systems, older people and the very young.

Sub(Surface) Service From The Virginia

By Kate Wiltrout

ABOARD THE VIRGINIA — It might be nuclear-powered, but make no mistake: the Virginia, the Navy's newest submarine, runs on liquid fuel — strong, hot coffee.

Fresh-brewed Folger's is a necessity for the 123 -man crew, most of whom stand six-hour watches twice a day, interrupted with 12 hours to sleep, eat, study, clean and repair machines.

Because their "days" last 18 hours — six on duty, which often means being tethered to a computer screen or a closet-sized room, followed by 12 off — submariners have no rhythm to their days and nights.

They know what time and day it is by what food is served: eggs means morning, burgers mean a specific day of the week. Hot meals are served four times a day: 5 a.m., 11 a.m., 5 p.m. and 11 p.m.

Throughout it all runs a constant stream of coffee: about 55 pots a day, said Chief Petty Officer Frank Chandler, the boat's head cook.

That 's almost five cups per man each day.

In the high-tech control room, where sonar technicians decipher sounds from the deep, navigators plot courses and the pilot and co-pilot drive the 377-foot sub, mugs are stowed everywhere: travel mugs are Velcro-strapped to poles; ordinary ceramic mugs are in circular metal frames so coffee doesn't splash.

On Sunday, as the \$2.2 billion boat pulsed through the blue-green water, Capt. D.J. Kern stood atop the bridge with two sailors on watch, occasionally sipping coffee to stay warm. When one sailor left the perch more than 30 feet above the sub's hull, he brought an empty white carafe with him on the climb down, along with a request for another pot.

Five years after the Virginia's keel was laid, the sub is finally ready to enter the fleet. It will be commissioned Saturday in Norfolk.

Food, and drink are two of the only creature comforts aboard a sub. For all but the top officers, "racks," or bunks, are too cramped for a sailor to sit up in bed. The capacity to e-mail family is rare. Mail is non-existent.

The chief form of entertainment comes from a lengthy list of movies shown each night in the 28-seat crew's mess, called The Blue

Ridge Cafe. The space is in use almost all day, whether for meals, coffee breaks, sailors studying or card games. A cook for 16 years, Chandler has 11 men working for him, all of whom pull 12-hour shifts — every day, no days off. Packed to the gills, the sub carries supplies that can feed 125 men for 100 days — 18,000 pounds worth of frozen food. After three weeks, though, Chandler said, fresh fruits and vegetables give way to canned goods. The eggs and mashed potatoes are dehydrated.

That makes pulling into port especially nice: cooks bring aboard local delicacies like tiger prawns and bamboo shoots in Thailand, curry and saffron in the Middle East, crabs and salmon in Alaska.

Chandler said running the kitchen is hard work, but he loves it — especially baking sweets. "I like to cook," he said. "I do it at home. I do it here."

Chandler jokes that he likes to fatten up the crew.

"The more people that fail the PRT, the happier I am," Chandler said, referring to the physical readiness test — though he knows the captain thinks differently.

Sailors can't gain weight easily because there's so little space to exercise while underway. The Virginia has just two exercise machines aboard.

Besides food, some submariners take pleasure in tobacco. Smoking is allowed — albeit with restrictions— on the sub. Only two sailors can light up at once, in a tiny spot beside the lone washer and dryer where a fan sucks up the smoke.

Though sailors can shower every day, they're limited to one load of laundry a week.

Privacy is almost non-existent for enlisted submariners — and all but about a dozen officers, who are accorded more spacious quarters, are enlisted.

Unlike previous submarine classes, the Virginia doesn't have rooms that house 24 or more racks.

Some staterooms have three bunks; bigger ones hold 12. Even so, floor space is so limited that all occupants of a room can't stand at the same time. Bunks have about 18 inches of space

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between the mattress and the next bunk. Storage consists of a 3-inch-deep tray beneath each bed.

So what makes men willing to endure the deprivations of living aboard a submarine, out of contact with loved ones for weeks or months at a time? Most say one thing: camaraderie.

Regardless of rank or job, the men are tight-knit in a way that few Navy crews are. Seaman David Vigil, a California native who enlisted last year, toils each day in the kitchen – an unappreciated job on most boats.

But Vigil likes it: cooking gumbo, making gravies, adapting to challenges and serving meals on time. He likes working in the spot where everyone gathers: “I get to see everybody’s faces,” he said.

Because the mess seats fewer than 30 men at once, and sailors cram in along the benches, a “culinary specialist” fetches drinks and desserts for his colleagues – usually with a smile or a snappy “Sure, chief.”

Vigil also likes serving officers in their wardroom, a small room with a large table that is set each meal with cloth napkins and tablecloth, silver utensils and china dishes.

The physical and mental health of the crew is Senior Chief Petty Officer Craig Soleim’s job.

A corpsman, he’s the lone medical officer aboard. Soleim describes himself as a jack-of-all-trades: He inspects sanitation in the kitchen and wash rooms, tests potable water, monitors radiation exposure and gives out medication. More importantly, though, he’s a relief valve for sailors who have trouble adjusting.

Soleim said that in the nine years he has been assigned to submarines, one sailor was disqualified from service because he learned the hard way that he was claustrophobic. Those who volunteer for sub duty – the crew is all volunteer – are psychologically screened. Still, even those deemed fit for duty sometimes need help coping with the lack of privacy and limited space.

“Submarine sailors, from the day they’re stuck on board, the stressors on them are just phenomenal,” Soleim said.

Sometimes commanders recommend that the doc talk to a specific sailor. Other times, he hangs out in his closet-sized office – located

right outside the chow line – and waits for people to stop by and chat.

“As the corpsman on board, I’m the compassionate liberal,” Soleim said. “I give them a hug, pat them on the back.”

Soleim estimated that about 5 percent of the submarine community, mostly junior sailors, washes out each year for mental health reasons.

The corpsman said the work all submariners do – and the trust they must have in each other – cements the crew. Every sailor on board must be qualified for submarine service or working toward it, meaning they pass a battery of tests for how to operate various systems on board.

No one specializes in just one thing: On the Virginia, one sailor who works in the torpedo room, two sonar technicians and one nuclear technician are also divers and rescue swimmers; they stand above deck when the sub drops off or picks up visitors. Others work in force-protection, armed with rifles or sidearms when subs surface and get close to shore. Everyone is taught how to deal with the two most deadly forces on a submarine: fire and flooding.

“Every single person aboard this boat, you’re putting your life in their hands,” Soleim said. “Damage control is the link to camaraderie.”

Unique ways to celebrate bond them, too. Once or twice a year, whether in the Bahamas or Alaska, sailors will plunge off one end of the boat for a “swim call.” Exactly halfway through a tour, the crew marks the occasion with a meal of prime rib, crabs and seafood.

That celebration may include a “Corn on the Cob” ceremony, where sailors pour chilled cans of corn over the Chief of the Boat, or COB – the highest-ranking enlisted sailor on board.

Petty Officer 1st Class Ron Perpetua says he misses his wife and two children most when he’s at sea. But the men he serves with are a family, too.

“There’s no closer knit group of guys,” Perpetua said. “We sleep, eat and work together. No one else in the world knows what you’re doing. It’s pretty much like I have 138 other brothers.”

Exercise Trident Warrior Takes Tarawa ESG Into Future

From USS Tarawa Public Affairs

ABOARD USS TARAWA, At Sea -- The crew of the San Diego-based amphibious assault ship USS Tarawa (LHA 1) had its first look at FORCENet, the next-generation naval warfighting process, during exercise Trident Warrior 04, Oct. 4-15.

The ships of the Tarawa Expeditionary Strike Group participated in Trident Warrior as they headed north to participate in Fleet Week celebrations in San Francisco. The participating units included Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 1, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Tarawa, USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52), USS Cleveland (LPD 7), USS Chosin (CG 65) and USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53).

"A lot of people compare FORCENet with Star Wars, because we're talking about how to fight battles in the timeframe from 2015 to 2020," said Cmdr. Paul Lommel, Tarawa's C4I Officer, who coordinated the ship's Trident Warrior efforts. "It's an opportunity for the Navy to take advantage of cutting-edge technology to make a major leap forward."

The FORCENet technology being tested during Trident Warrior is essential to how U.S. naval forces will conduct battle in the future, according to Tarawa Commanding Officer Capt. John Riley. Riley had a commanding overview of the promise that this new process offers to the Navy's future aboard his ship, where more than 150 different FORCENet capabilities and processes were tested and evaluated during this year's Trident Warrior exercise.

Overall, FORCENet takes a major step toward achieving the fundamental concepts of the Chief of Naval Operations' vision for future Naval operations, according to Lommel. It will align and integrate Sea Service warriors, networks, sensors and weapons to implement a more centralized warfare network. It also will empower commanders in battle to make better decisions faster and to see the effects of those decisions more rapidly.

"Increasing the speed that our naval forces can successfully engage our adversaries in the global war on terrorism has become critically important," said Riley. "With FORCENet, instead of taking

hours to execute an operational mission, now we're working down to minutes."

Outside the improved warfighting capabilities, FORCENet offers other aspects that will improve the quality of life for Sailors, according to Lommel. Sailors will be able to access information on managing their careers through Navy Knowledge Online, and be able to use the Distance Support Web site to help them do their jobs aboard ship. Additionally, they will be able to communicate with their detailers and family using e-mail and Web-based services while deployed.

"What impressed me the most was that Navy Knowledge Online gave me a standpoint of where I'm at right now in my career and what I need to do to advance," said Tarawa crew member Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class Tyrell Cleveland, who learned about this new career management system. "I anticipate it will help me a great deal as I start to plan for my future."

According to Lommel, FORCENet has no 'end state' – the technology and capabilities will continue to grow and evolve as necessary to ensure the continued dominance of U.S. and coalition forces on the battlefield. More importantly to the Sailors and Marines of the Tarawa ESG, most of the FORCENet technology will remain permanently installed aboard their ships for use during their upcoming deployment.

"The technology looks very promising," said Information Systems Technician 1st Class Martin MacLorain, who assisted the Trident Warrior contractors working in Tarawa's Automated Data Processing shop. "In the parts of our job that involve the FORCENet technology, everything will be more laid out and there'll be less guesswork involved in our work."

"What I've liked most about Trident Warrior has been the interface between the systems commands, the technical experts and the ship," said Riley. "This has been a textbook example of building and testing equipment. The technical experts came aboard during Trident Warrior and brought us new systems and equipment, along with the training and logistics support. This has been a true partnership that will bring us, our shipmates and the Navy into the future."

Bahrain, U.S. Conclude Bilateral Exercise Neon Response 2005

By Journalist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Sarah Bibbs, Commander, U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs

MANAMA, Bahrain -- Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 4 Det. 4 completed bilateral exercise Neon Response 2005 held Oct. 3-13 with the Bahrain Royal Naval Force (RBNF) and the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF).

"Neon Response is an annual training evolution between the U.S. Navy EOD and the Bahrain Defense Force that enhances foreign relations and operational techniques between the two nations," said Lt. Jeff DeMarco, EODMU 4 Det. 4 officer in charge. "It's a unique opportunity to see tools and techniques that are not in our own inventories."

During the first half of the two-week exercise, EODMU 4 Det. 4 and members of its dive locker trained 11 Bahrain Royal Navy divers in classroom and open-water dive applications.

"This was the first time that the Bahrain Royal Navy participated in Neon Response," said DeMarco. "Everyone was really excited, and it went well. The Bahrainis were eager to learn what we had to teach them, and our guys were excited to learn what their capabilities were."

The second week of Neon Response consisted of classroom instruction that culminated in a dual-phase training evolution between the detachment, EODMU 4 Readiness and Training Det., and the BDF.

The first phase began with prosecution and remote detonation of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). "It was just a demonstration of

some of our tools and how they give us results," said EODMU 4 Det. 4 Master Chief Hull Technician (EOD/FPJ) Mark Olsen.

The second phase consisted of hands-on, practical applications that Olsen said were an invaluable part of EOD training.

"To do this job, you have to train," he said. "It's like any perishable skill - if you don't use it, you lose it. It might come back to you after you mess up, but you really don't want to do that in EOD. You want to make your mistakes in training so you don't make them in combat."

The BDF and U.S. Navy EOD teams staged events for each other, giving one another the opportunity to overcome scenarios and IEDs unfamiliar to their own branches.

"Our guys learned a lot," said EODMU 4 Det. 4 Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate (EOD/FPJ) Jay Ulrich. "They saw a bunch of different devices and stuff that was unusual to us. The Bahrainis used mostly 'old-school' techniques. They brought us back 10 or 20 years with stuff like booby traps, and the young guys needed to see that. If you go up to Iraq, that's exactly what they're using, so we brought a lot of knowledge back."

Though Neon Response is now over, DeMarco said the relationships formed during the exercise are an additional benefit for the EOD Det. and the BDF, RBNF.

"If we're ever in need of something from them, we know what their capabilities are, and they know what ours are," DeMarco said. "We've had a face-to-face meeting and we've worked together. It's much easier when you know who you're talking to."

Commander's Firing Shows Navy Changes

JFK Squadron Leader Was Replaced After Off-Duty Incident In Dubai

By Gregory Piatt

The weekend firing of a fighter squadron commander assigned to the Jacksonville-based USS John F. Kennedy shows that today's Navy leadership is holding its commanding officers accountable for actions that might have been overlooked in the past, a local admiral and a Washington-based Navy analyst said Tuesday.

Cmdr. Guy Maiden, the officer-in-charge of Navy Fighter Squadron 103, was removed from command Sunday because of an undisclosed off-duty incident during a recent port visit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Navy said in a news release.

Maiden took command of the F-14 Tomcat squadron, based at Oceana Naval Air Station in Virginia Beach, on Sept. 1. He was replaced by Cmdr. David Landess, the squadron's previous commanding officer, the Navy said.

Maiden's firing is the second since August in which a commander's tour was cut short on the aircraft carrier, which is deployed in the Persian Gulf. Capt. Steve Squires, the carrier's commander, was relieved of duty after the ship hit and sank a small wooden boat in the Persian Gulf in July. Squires was eventually replaced this month by Capt. Dennis Fitzpatrick.

Squires was one of 29 commanders fired by the Navy since February 2003, according to the Navy Times, the trade publication that has been tracking the service's skipper firing trend.

"The Navy is holding people more accountable now," said retired Vice Adm. Mike

Kalleres, a resident of Jacksonville. "They want to enforce moral integrity and accountability."

That message comes from the top, according to one military analyst. Navy Secretary Gordon England and Adm. Vern Clark, chief of Naval Operations, are highly regarded by the Bush administration because they will take pre-emptive action before it becomes a problem for them in the media, said Loren Thompson, a Navy analyst from the Washington-based Lexington Institute, in a phone interview Tuesday.

"These guys run a tight ship," Thompson said. "They are buttoning down on unpredictable people."

Tailhook, the Navy sexual harassment scandal that sprang out of a 1991 naval aviators convention in Las Vegas, has caused England and Clark to take the no-nonsense attitude, Thompson said.

Plus, the Navy is no longer as relevant a service as it was during the Cold War, he said. The war on terror has focused the military's emphasis on Special Forces troops and intelligence.

The Navy is radically transforming its culture, Thompson said. It's like a CEO trying to change the way a company thinks and does business, Thompson said.

"The U.S. Navy takes these incidents very seriously and holds service members accountable," the Navy said in its release on Maiden's firing.

Navy Proposes Pulling Out Of JASSM Program

By Amy Butler

The Navy has proposed in its FY '06 budget plan pulling out of a cooperative effort with the Air Force to buy the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM) made by Lockheed Martin [LMT], as the missile remains off of flight status due to difficulties in tests earlier this year.

JASSM is the Pentagon's next-generation, air-launched and stealthy cruise missile for use on a variety of strike aircraft. Despite being hailed as an acquisition success due to its rapid run through development and earning Pentagon approval in May to move to full-rate production, the program has been facing trouble since earlier this year when it encountered complications during flight tests. The missile remains suspended from flight tests, according to Jake Swinson, a spokesman for the Air Armament Center, which is overseeing the weapons development from Eglin AFB, Fla.

The missile's reliability issues prompted congressional appropriators to slash \$8.3 million, equal to 57 missiles, from the Air Force's procurement budget in FY '05 (Defense Daily, July 23).

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff are reviewing the Navy's proposal, although officials decline to discuss the FY '06 budget plan before it is released to Congress in February. The Navy's proposal must still pass muster by a host of analysts in OSD, and some officials there could advocate keeping the effort joint.

Lt. John Schofield, a Navy spokesman, said the service's FY '06 investment plans are "predecisional" until revealed next year, and he declined to provide comment on the issue.

During last year's budget review, then Pentagon Comptroller Dov Zakheim approved a one-year slip to the Navy's JASSM procurement funding from FY '07 to FY '08 (Defense Daily, Jan. 6). The Navy's FY '06 to FY '11 spending proposal suggests eliminating that JASSM money in FY '08 and beyond.

A Lockheed Martin spokeswoman said yesterday the company has "not been formally notified" of any changes to the Navy's JASSM procurement plans. The company received in May 2003 a \$53 million contract to integrate the missile on the F/A-18 E/F aircraft and to integrate it into the Navy's mission planning systems. That contract was later restructured to a 75-month effort--the earlier

deal covered six years--and it increased flight tests from seven to eight. The company has begun tests to demonstrate JASSM suitability for aircraft carrier operations.

The plan from the Navy comes a year after the Air Force proposed--and later received approval--to back out of the Navy-led Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW) program. The Air Force opted to purchase more of the Lockheed Martin-made extended range Wind Corrected Munitions Dispensers (WCMD) than to continue purchasing JSOW, which is made by Raytheon [RTN] (Defense Daily, Dec. 11). As part of what officials have described as an "alimony" agreement on JSOW, OSD directed the Air Force to pay the Navy a total of \$100 million from FY '05 to FY '09 to help absorb an increase in per-unit cost.

The Air Force is expected to buy roughly 4,900 JASSMs. The Navy's buy, much smaller in comparison, is to be 453 missiles. The Air Force's decision to pull out of JSOW had a direct impact on the per unit cost of that weapon because the departing service's share of the program was significant. With a potential JASSM breakup, however, the impact could be minimal to nil because the weapon has been priced based on the Air Force's quantities, according to one government source.

Yet, the fate of JSOW remains unclear. Officials in OSD's acquisition office have asked the Navy and Air Force to reconsider purchases of their area attack weapons--specifically JSOW and WCMD-ER--due to some concerns about unexploded ordnance on the battlefield. Both of those weapons are designed to litter the battlefield with submunitions that counter soft targets (Defense Daily, Sept. 28).

Although some onlookers say the Navy's move on JASSM is retaliation for the Air Force's withdrawal from JSOW, others suggest the program could not withstand the massive fiscal pressure facing the Navy in the coming years.

The Navy's standoff strike requirement that would be filled by JASSM won't go away if the service pulls out of the effort. One government source suggested the burden could be handled by a combination of JSOW and the higher-end ship-launched Tactical Tomahawk, which is built by Raytheon. Additionally, this source noted that some Standoff Land Attack Missiles-Expanded Response (SLAM-ER) weapons, made by Boeing [BA], remain in the Navy's inventory.

Navy League Says It Drops Support Of ASA's Sea Power Ambassador Program

By Lorenzo Cortes

The Navy League said yesterday that it had withdrawn support of the American Shipbuilding Association's (ASA) Sea Power Ambassador program, citing a difference in tactical approaches.

"We share many goals with ASA, and will continue to work with them on issues of mutual concern," Navy League National President Sheila McNeill said in a statement. "But we have at times found their approach to issues too narrow and their tactics too divisive."

ASA says its Sea Power Ambassador program's goal is "is to educate the American public and elected officials on the need to rebuild the fleet of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard to meet America's security requirements in the 21st Century." The main impetus for the program is ASA's view that the size of the fleet is in jeopardy and that the Navy will continue to cut shipbuilding numbers in future budgets.

ASA has spearheaded reports on this issue showing the shipbuilding decline in FY '06 and encouraged congressional leaders to voice concern to top defense officials like Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The Navy League's decision to shut down its support of the Sea Power Ambassador Program stems in part from actions that occurred last February, when the program launched criticisms of naval leadership that the Navy League considered "heavy handed," Stephen Pietropaoli, the Navy League's

Executive Director, told Defense Daily yesterday. He also noted that Navy League did support increased shipbuilding, but also believes it has a broader view of supporting sea power in general.

ASA President Cynthia Brown told Defense Daily yesterday that she was taken "off guard" by the announcement because the Ambassador program does not receive financial support from the Navy League.

She did acknowledge that some Navy League members participated in the Ambassador program, but that there was no formal agreement between the two organizations.

An observer noted that tension between ASA and the Navy has been building for months. ASA has been aggressive about boosting the numbers of ships in the Navy's budget. The Navy has argued that the number of ships, while important, matters less than the capabilities they will have in the future.

"This is really between [ASA] and the Navy," the observer said. "Navy League apparently wants to stay on the sidelines. By withdrawing its support, it accomplishes that."

A Navy official welcomed the move.

"It's obvious that the Navy League realizes that a strong naval force is a combination of not only the ship count but also the capability of those platforms and our Navy people," the official said. "They understand that our Navy people are the true strength of our force."

Admiral: Navy Making Strides In Directed Energy Weapons

By Jefferson Morris

The U.S. Navy is stepping up its efforts to develop directed energy weapons and has made significant strides in recent months, according to Rear Adm. Brad Hicks, commander of the Naval Surface Warfare Center.

"As fiscal constraints allow ... the Navy is increasing its efforts in directed energy," Hicks said during a presentation at the Directed Energy Professional Society's seventh annual symposium in Rockville, Md., on Oct. 19. "We continue to set world records in [Free Electron Laser] performance. ..."

One significant milestone was a test of a 10.6-kilowatt High Energy Laser (HEL) that took place at Jefferson Laboratory in Newport News, Va., in August, according to Hicks.

Due to heating of the optics, the laser was limited to intermittent firings of one second, separated by three seconds of cooling. "However, at 8.5 kilowatts, we were continuous," Hicks said. "That is a heck of an achievement." New optics soon will be delivered that should enable continuous operation at 10 kilowatts, he said.

In the area of targeting, the Navy has begun the High Energy Laser Low Aspect Target Tracking (HELLATT) program, which will develop "the ability to acquire and track small, low-contrast targets in a cluttered background," Hicks said. This would be particularly effective

for defending ships against low-flying cruise missiles, he said.

Active Denial

The Navy also is interested in the nonlethal Active Denial System (ADS), which began as a 2002 Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) program (DAILY, March 10). ADS uses a beam of energy to heat water under the skin, causing intense discomfort but no permanent damage.

"We view ... this kind of technology as part of our force protection packages, both at shore and sea," Hicks said. While anchored or passing through waterways, ADS could be used "to deter and determine the intent of a possible threat prior to lethal engagement," he said.

Prime contractor Raytheon is developing ADS in three sizes - a Humvee-mounted 100-kilowatt system, a 30-kilowatt system, and a 400-watt system. Raytheon is developing the 30-kilowatt system with internal research and development funds, with support from the Navy, Hicks said.

The 30-kilowatt system will be roughly half the size of the 100-kilowatt system and will have slightly less than a third of its range. For force protection, it could be installed on a small ship to extend the range of engagement, according to Hicks. The even more compact 400-watt system could serve as a crew-served gun during urban operations, he said.

Military Voters May Play Key Role In Close Election

By Gordon Trowbridge

From Florida to Texas to Washington state, military voters could be the deciding factor in a close presidential election and congressional races Nov. 2.

Political experts say uniformed voters and veterans could swing key states in the race between President Bush and Sen. John Kerry, as well as Senate races in states such as Florida and Alaska. And two of the nation's closest races for the House will occur in districts with massive military and veteran populations.

While military voters don't yet rival soccer moms and NASCAR dads as groups targeted for attention by political campaigns, their numbers — especially in the Sun Belt states where veterans are prone to retire — have made an impact in past races.

"Veterans are one of those groups that very clearly made the difference in Florida in 2000," said Clay Richards, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. Florida voters with military backgrounds backed Bush by nearly 2 to 1, helping provide his razor-thin margin over Al Gore.

While surveys such as the recent Military Times Election Survey show active-duty service members are likely to support Bush, a tour of the electoral map shows the larger group of veterans and military families could help Kerry and other Democrats in key races.

The presidential race

Pennsylvania and Florida, two crucial states for Kerry and Bush, show the military vote isn't monolithic in its preferences. Veterans — those either in uniform now or who have left the military — backed Bush over Kerry 2-to-1 in an early October Quinnipiac Poll of Florida.

But in Pennsylvania, Kerry pulled even with Bush, each drawing the support of 44 percent of veterans, after a September poll showed Bush ahead of Kerry among veterans by 11 percentage points.

Richards said Kerry's performance in the first presidential debate had a major impact on Pennsylvania veterans, who tend to be older and more blue collar than those in Florida.

The larger active-duty contingent in Florida, with its many bases, helps Bush there, Richards said.

Like Pennsylvania, Ohio has a small active-duty presence but hundreds of thousands of veterans who could decide a state vital to both candidates.

"We're all assuming the president will win a majority of the veteran vote, but what's clearly important is the size of that majority," said Herb Asher, an expert on state politics at Ohio State University.

With polls showing an overall dead heat in the state, Kerry is likely to capture Ohio's important 20 electoral votes if he can eat into Bush's military edge there.

The House and Senate

Florida and Alaska will hold two of the tightest Senate elections in the country, and military voters in both states could make a difference.

Uniformed personnel and veterans make up more than 18 percent of Alaska's voting-age population, the highest figure in the country, which could aid Republican Lisa Murkowski in holding onto a traditionally GOP seat against Democrat Tony Knowles. And in Florida, Republican Mel Martinez is locked in a tie with Democrat Betty Castor.

But two House races may be the best examples in the nation of the sway military voters can carry.

In the 12th District of Georgia and the 17th District of Texas, major military bases are playing key roles in a pair of too-close-to-call campaigns.

When Texas Republicans launched a controversial redistricting plan last year, they made sure to move Fort Hood outside Democratic Rep. Chet Edwards' district. That didn't stop Edwards from bringing a handful of retired Army generals to his campaign kickoff this summer.

"I consider it a compliment that Mr. DeLay thinks taking the only two-division Army installation out of my district will hurt me," said

MORE

Edwards, referring to House Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas.

Edwards, in a tight race with Republican Arlene Wohlgemuth, ran previous campaigns in a largely Republican district on his strong support for Fort Hood.

In Georgia, Republican Max Burns, whose district includes parts of Forts Gordon and Stewart, is one of the most vulnerable House incumbents in the nation. A House freshman,

Burns is touting his work to repeal an offset in military retired pay for retirees who also draw veterans' disability, and on a proposal to name a new interstate highway in honor of Fort Stewart's 3rd Infantry Division.

Burns' opponent, Democrat John Barrow, argues Burns has not done enough in Congress to boost pay for service members or fund health care for veterans.

Witnesses Say Penny Incited Fatal Dispute Near Bar

By Tim McGlone

That's what witnesses say set off a dispute in a Colley Avenue bar that led to the death of a 31-year-old sailor and the arrest of another sailor on a murder charge.

Joshua J. Newton, 22, who is assigned to the carrier Enterprise, was arraigned Tuesday in General District Court on one count of second-degree murder.

Newton, originally from Austin, Texas, said nothing during the brief appearance and was returned to the jail, where he is being held without bond. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Dec. 16.

Newton and some friends were sitting in a booth adjacent to the victim, Eric C. Dahms, and his friends the night of Oct. 4 at the Red Dog bar. Witnesses say one of the men flicked a penny over the booth and struck the other man.

There were conflicting reports of who flicked the penny.

Witnesses and the bar owners said words were exchanged briefly, but then the parties, who did not know each other, bought each other drinks.

After that, "everybody thought it was calm," said Red Dog co-owner Stephen Delacruz.

Co-owner Charlie Sears said had the dispute escalated from there, both groups would have been thrown out.

"Our policy is, any disturbance and you're out," Sears said. "I don't care who you are."

The two groups left at different times, but Newton allegedly followed or waited for Dahms in the parking lot behind Naro Expanded Cinema, witnesses and police said.

Police said that punches were thrown and that Dahms fell to the ground, striking the back of his head on the pavement. Newton ran off, witnesses and police said.

After Dahms hit the ground, his friends and employees from San Antonio Sam's tried to help him. They were sopping up blood with a box of tissues before police and an ambulance arrived.

Dahms was conscious but incoherent and struggling to get up.

He died the next day at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital.

"All over flicking pennies," Sears said Tuesday morning at the bar.

"It's just so senseless," Delacruz said.

Delacruz said Dahms was a semi-regular customer who never caused problems before. Newton was not known to the staff.

Delacruz and Sears said police returned to Red Dog a few days later and obtained a credit card receipt used by someone in Newton's party that helped track him down. He was arrested Monday at his home in the 8600 block of Kearsarge Place, just outside Norfolk Naval Station.

A police spokesman would not speak about the motive for the dispute or the way detectives tracked down Newton.

Dahms, who was stationed on the destroyer Donald Cook, was originally from Iowa. He recently enlisted in the Navy and was training to become a boatswain's mate. His obituary in the Ida County Courier in Iowa said Dahms donated his organs to seven people.

Services were held this week in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



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Wednesday, October 20, 2004

NEW YORK TIMES 19 OCT 04

Military Dress Code Gets Tech Upgrade

By Marguerite Reardon, CNET News.com

The Navy is finally getting onboard when it comes to updating its dress code to include 21st century personal technology.

Last week, the Navy announced it has revamped its official dress code to be more compatible with modern technology and fashion trends. Among the changes is a special provision that allows sailors to carry cell phones, PDAs (personal digital assistants) and pagers on their belts.

The change is a big win for gadget nerds who previously were only allowed to wear pagers as part of their official uniform. Any sailor carrying a cell phone or a BlackBerry had to keep it in a pocket or a bag.

"Nobody really uses pagers and beepers anymore," said Lisa Mikoliczyk, a spokeswoman for Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry Scott. "People are using cell phones and PDAs. Basically, the uniform regulations were updated to get rid of the obsolete terminology, so that it accommodates all communication devices."

But the new uniform policy isn't without a few restrictions. Only sailors using cell phones

or personal digital devices for official Navy business may include them as part of the uniform. And the devices must not be seen from the front. In short, sailors can forget about strapping iPods onto their belts and passing it off as part of the official uniform.

"You can't have your own personal bright green and orange cell phone hanging from your uniform," Mikoliczyk said.

The new communications tech policy is one of several changes to the dress code, which were recommended after a 2003 survey of more than 40,000 sailors.

Some of the other changes include new dress requirements for female sailors. Now women sailors have the option to wear skirts or pants for official duty, even for formal events. They are also no longer required to carry skirts with them in their sailor bags. Women can also ditch their military purses--boxy and widely unpopular "granny bags"--and purchase more stylish replacements from department stores.

The new dress code also no longer requires sailors to use their hands to carry gym bags, suitcases and garment bags while in uniform. They now may sling them over their shoulders.